United Nations A/CN.10/PV.284

General Assembly

Official Records

Disarmament Commission

284th meeting

Monday, 7 April 2008, 10 a.m.

New York

Chairman: Mr. De Klerk ..... (Netherlands)

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Opening of the session

The Chairman: I declare open the 2008 substantive session of the Disarmament Commission.

The urgency of the work of the United Nations Disarmament Commission is clear to everyone reading the papers these days, given the attention paid to arms and armed conflict. Sometimes, in American newspapers, the word "arms" is writ large, as ARMs, meaning adjustable rate mortgages and referring to the meltdown of the housing market. But mostly the references are to weapons, both conventional and non-conventional; to the arms trade, the pernicious impact of new weaponry or the spread of weapons to new environments; or to the difficulties of building down nuclear arsenals or containing the spread of weapons of mass destruction, both to other States and to non-State actors.

In these testing times for disarmament and non-proliferation, the world needs leadership from the United Nations in general and its Secretary-General in particular — and I want to express my gratitude to him for being with us today and my admiration of him for showing just that leadership. From day one, he has called it a personal priority to revitalize multilateral efforts in disarmament and non-proliferation, and — to give one example — just a few days ago he spoke out forcefully for strengthening the anti-personnel mine regime.

On the first day of this year's session of the Disarmament Commission, I want to make clear my commitment to making this Commission part of that revitalization. In doing so, it is a privilege to build on the work of my predecessors, Ambassador Oh Joon, former Deputy Permanent Representative of the Republic of Korea and Chairman of the 2006 session, and Ambassador Elbio Rosselli, Permanent Representative of Uruguay, Chairman of the 2007 session. At the same time, it is a pleasure to have two able working group Chairs by my side: Jean-Francis Zinsou of Benin and Carlos Perez of Brazil. I am confident that they will ably guide our negotiations. I am grateful for the work that Mr. Zinsou and Mr. Carlos Duarte, Mr. Perez's predecessor, have done in the past two years to bridge the gaps between Member States' positions.

Still, as the Disarmament Commission now starts its third and last year of the 2006-2008 cycle, the differences in positions remain significant and finding consensus will not be easy. But we have to. The United Nations disarmament machinery has produced great results in the past, both with regard to weapons of mass destruction and with regard to certain conventional weaponry, but at present it urgently needs a boost. Moreover, for the Commission itself, its credibility is at stake. It can ill afford a second three-year cycle without any substantive result. We all have a common responsibility or, to quote an American politician who is much in the news these days, "No one is exempt from the call to find common ground". I therefore urge member States to focus on areas of potential consensus

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and not to linger on issues that they know will not find agreement. We all need to avoid a meltdown. Our common house needs to be in order in three weeks' time.

I do not need to dwell now on the substantive issues on our agenda. They are the same as in the past two years and they reflect the fact that, when the original United Nations Disarmament Commission was created in 1952, it was a merger of the Atomic Energy Commission and the Commission for Conventional Armaments. While substantive agreement on both substantive items on the Commission's agenda is not immediately a farewell to arms, it will be a clear signal that the period of stagnation that has troubled the disarmament debate is over — a signal that could also spur progress in related forums. I hope that, in a collective effort, we can reach such a substantive agreement.

I now give the floor to the Secretary-General.

The Secretary-General: I welcome this opportunity to address the Disarmament Commission, a venerable component of the United Nations that is as important today as it was when it was set up 56 years ago.

Let me start by congratulating Ambassador De Klerk of the Netherlands on assuming the prime responsibility for guiding this Commission. I thank the departing Chairman of the Commission at last year's session, Ambassador Rosselli of Uruguay, for his strenuous and successful efforts to advance its work.

I came here today to underscore the importance I attach to this Commission, which performs a unique function in the United Nations disarmament machinery, serving as a deliberative body that reports to the General Assembly.

This session is especially important because it is the last in the Commission's three-year cycle. Now is the time for all member States to make extra efforts to seek a consensus. Those efforts are essential, given the vital importance of disarmament and non-proliferation in shaping international peace and security. We must all work together — the Secretariat, member States and civil society — to reinvigorate our collective efforts to reach our shared goals in those fields. Failure is not an option. Its consequences could well jeopardize many other goals of the Charter and the security and well-being of all our member States.

At last year's session, I expressed regret that setbacks in the field of disarmament have become the norm, not an exception. I called on the Commission to move forward in a spirit of compromise and accommodation. Today, I am renewing that call with an even greater sense of urgency.

Countries across the world take very seriously the challenges posed by weapons of mass destruction, especially nuclear arms, including risks from their continued existence, their geographical spread and the possibility that they could fall into the hands of terrorists. States are also highly conscious of the need to regulate conventional arms because of the risks they pose to security interests and the obstacles they create for economic and social development.

Despite a collective awareness of those risks and challenges, however, the world is still confronted with twin dangers: the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and the excessive accumulation of conventional arms. Multilateral cooperation remains absolutely indispensable in pursuing the noble goals of disarmament and non-proliferation. That is a solemn duty that cannot be fulfilled through confrontation, condemnation or the adoption of intractable policy positions. A true sense of mutual understanding and respect, give-and-take, and prudent flexibility are needed.

There is little doubt that we will not go far if each delegation proceeds expecting to achieve here and now nothing less than 100 per cent of its desired objectives. The pursuit of maximalist goals by some will yield only minimal results for all. Worse, we could see this institution itself decline under a cloud of pessimism and despair.

It is not a defeat to move forward today on those issues on which progress is possible and to pursue other goals tomorrow. There is no shame or loss of pride in acting according to the laws of reason, and there is really no responsible alternative. The international community must work together and demonstrate its resolve to move from challenges and opportunities to concrete results. Partial victories are still victories. Small steps forward are still steps forward.

Some may say that so much more needs to be done. That is no doubt true, but it is no excuse for lagging where progress is possible. Since it is indeed possible to make progress on the issues before the

Commission, I believe that this body does not have the option of closing its current session by relegating those matters to unfinished business. The time to finish that business is now.

The approach I am recommending does not amount to abandoning ambition or endorsing the lowest common denominator as the highest form of wisdom. On the contrary, I believe that incremental progress in this institution can have positive spillover effects across the United Nations disarmament machinery. It can also help in cultivating a positive climate for addressing disarmament issues in other multilateral forums, including those dealing with treaty regimes. In short, progress and success can be contagious; what is gained in one part of the system can benefit the whole.

That is true not just about the way we address the challenges of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation; it also applies to the pursuit of practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional weapons. Although the international community has made some significant progress in that area in recent years — especially in addressing the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons — new conventional weapon issues are emerging, while old problems still demand solutions. The fact that conventional arms continue to kill many thousands of people every year is often overlooked, except, of course, by the States and individuals suffering most from the bloodshed.

The next three weeks offer a chance for the Commission to reach consensus on recommendations about the important issues at hand, bringing its three-year effort to a successful conclusion. I hope that members will take this opportunity to demonstrate the Commission's continuing potential as an important, even indispensable, part of the United Nations disarmament machinery.

Let me also assure members that the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs is here to offer its full cooperation and support for their work. The High Representative and his staff, as well as their colleagues from the Department of General Assembly and Conference Management, will continue to provide the Commission with all the assistance it needs.

I wish everyone an effective, successful and productive session.

Adoption of the agenda

The Chairman: The agenda for this session is contained in document A/CN.10/L.57.

Members of the Commission may recall that, at its organizational meeting on 18 March 2008, the Commission took note of the provisional agenda and decided that no amendments were needed. Thus, at this meeting the Commission does not need to take any action on document A/CN.10/L.57.

Election of the remaining officers

The Chairman: As members will recall, the Commission is still to elect the Rapporteur and two Vice-Chairmen from the Group of Eastern European States.

I want to inform the Commission that the Group of Eastern European States has successfully completed its nominating process and we now have both candidates for the two posts of Vice-Chairmen. The Group has nominated Mr. Ivan Mutavdžić of Croatia and Mr. Hrachia Tashchian of Armenia to serve as Vice-Chairmen of the Commission.

If I hear no objection, I shall take it that the Commission wishes to elect Mr. Ivan Mutavdžić and Mr. Hrachia Tashchian as Vice-Chairmen.

It was so decided.

The Chairman: I have also been informed that the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States has nominated Ms. Mónica Bolaños-Pérez of Guatemala for the post of Rapporteur of the Commission.

If I hear no objection, I shall take it that the Commission wishes to elect Ms. Mónica Bolaños-Pérez as Rapporteur.

It was so decided.

The Chairman: Allow me on behalf of the Commission and the members of the Bureau to warmly congratulate the newly elected members of the Bureau and to wish them success in discharging their duties. I am sure that they will make an important contribution to the smooth work of the Commission this year. On a more personal note, I would like to mention that I shall count on their support and counsel.

Organization of work

The Chairman: Let me on behalf of the Bureau make some general observations on our future work. As members will recall, some issues concerning the working groups, including the election of a new chairman of Working Group II, were already discussed and settled at our organizational meeting. Here, I want to say a few words about the general debate at the plenary meetings.

In 2006, the General Assembly decided to encourage the Disarmament Commission to invite, as appropriate, outside experts on disarmament for discussions. Based on that recommendation, the Bureau last year carefully studied the possibility of inviting experts for this year's session.

Taking into consideration the principles of balanced geographical distribution and representation of all major schools of thought on two complex disarmament issues, as well as financial and organizational aspects, it came to the conclusion that it was necessary to further consult with the Commission on specific organizational and substantive aspects. During the course of this year's session, we in the Bureau intend to continue consultations with member States and expect them to guide and assist us in arriving at the right decisions.

Let me refer to some areas where decisions are needed. We have to decide within which format — plenary or working group — we should invite the experts to speak. Since the meetings of working groups are traditionally closed sessions, the Commission, as the master of its own procedure, has to take a decision that will constitute a major departure from the existing practice if we decide to open the meetings of working groups. If, on the other hand, the experts will be speaking within the plenary, then no changes to the basic rules of the Commission are required, except deciding on the format of the plenary meetings that has to be agreed upon.

In case the Commission should decide to invite experts, we will be faced with several options. First, we could continue with statements on all disarmament matters within the general debate, as is the case now, and at the end of each meeting allocate time for experts. Secondly, we could substitute the general debate with a structured thematic discussion that would focus on each of the two items under consideration, and experts could participate as a part of those structured discussions. The third option could be a combination of the two approaches, namely, to divide the general debate into two distinct phases: general statements for the first phase for member States only, and structured thematic discussions, in panel form or otherwise, for the later part, with the participation of experts, or setting aside one full meeting for such presentations and discussions.

A decision is also required on a somewhat unrelated issue, which was also discussed during the consultations, namely, a more active and direct participation of non-governmental organizations. The Bureau interjected that item at the request of member States, although the issue has not been addressed in agreed recommendations. Here again, it was concluded that there are no simple solutions and that we need guidance from the membership of the Commission.

It is our opinion that further consultations on those and other issues are needed in the course of this 2008 session before we start to practically implement such changes. Thus, I intend to continue those consultations with a view to seeking members' ideas and advice.

In closing I want to point to the fact that, next year, the Commission will be starting a new three-year cycle, as matters stand now, and the time could be very propitious for the introduction of an innovative approach to the format of the Disarmament Commission.

With those brief remarks, I now open the floor to delegations wishing to make statements within the general exchange of views. Delegations should feel free to comment on the issues I have raised regarding a somewhat different format for Disarmament Commission meetings in the coming years.

General exchange of views

Mr. Natalegawa (Indonesia): On behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), I would like first to congratulate you, Sir, on your election to the chairmanship of the United Nations Disarmament Commission at this important session. We are confident that, under your able stewardship, the 2008 session will yield tangible outcomes that can fulfil the mandate entrusted to the Commission by the General Assembly. NAM also extends its felicitation to the other members of the Bureau and the chairs of the working groups on their elections.

NAM welcomes the Secretary-General and thanks him for his very important remarks. His commitment to and efforts in realizing a world that is stable, peaceful and prosperous for all humanity are most valued by us. The Movement would also like to reaffirm its support to the Secretary-General for his noble work in the areas of international disarmament, peace and security.

NAM underscores the importance for all United Nations Member States to abide by their commitment to the aims and principles of the United Nations Charter, as well as to the established norms of international law. Here, NAM would also like to reiterate its principled positions on nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, as contained in the outcomes and documents of the various NAM summits and conferences on those subjects.

It is regrettable that there has been a regression on the internationally agreed disarmament agenda in the past few years. The Disarmament Commission has, unfortunately, also experienced setbacks in that respect. While one can identify many reasons to be despondent, our Movement remains optimistic and will always strive to take constructive steps to promote peace and security in our world.

The Disarmament Commission can be very effective, as seen in its numerous productive sessions, particularly that of 1999, when it was able to reach consensus on guidelines for establishing nuclear-weapon-free zones and for conventional arms control. The work of the Commission has contributed greatly to the emergence of global norms on disarmament, but NAM is concerned that, since the 2003 session of the Commission, the Commission has been unable to play its due role.

We see the deliberative function of the Disarmament Commission becoming even more important in these times. The group remains firmly committed to the Commission's basic purposes and principles and reaffirms the centrality of the Commission as the specialized and deliberative body within the United Nations multilateral disarmament machinery providing for an in-depth deliberation on specific disarmament issues, with the submission of concrete recommendations to the General Assembly.

NAM wishes the two chairs of the working groups success in chairing the deliberations. We all need to support them fully in that regard. The group calls upon United Nations Member States to display the necessary political will and flexibility for achieving agreement on the recommendations based on the two agenda items of the current cycle.

NAM stresses that progress in nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation in all its aspects is essential to the strengthening of international peace and security. The Movement appeals to all States to pursue and intensify multilateral negotiations, in line with the consensus of the Final Document of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, with a clear goal to achieve nuclear disarmament. As agreed, that must take place under effective international controls and in accordance with the international disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation regimes.

On agenda item 4, "Recommendations for achieving the objective of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation of nuclear weapons", NAM reiterates its principled positions on nuclear disarmament and the related issue of nuclear non-proliferation, which have been fully reflected in the relevant documents adopted by the summits and ministerial meetings of NAM, including the fourteenth NAM summit in Havana in September 2006. The vision and principles of the Final Document of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament also remain very pertinent here. The Movement highlights the urgency for all members of the Commission to fulfil their obligations in relation to arms control and disarmament, and to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons in all its aspects.

NAM underscores that nuclear disarmament constitutes its primary disarmament objective and remains its highest priority. In that regard, the nuclear-weapon States need to implement the unequivocal undertaking of accomplishing the total elimination of their nuclear weapons. The group is very concerned at the slow pace of progress and, in some cases, the reversal on nuclear disarmament by the nuclear-weapon States. In that connection, multilateral negotiations should commence without delay.

NAM again calls for the convening of an international conference at the earliest possible date, with the objective of attaining an agreement on a phased programme for the complete elimination of nuclear weapons with a specified time frame to eliminate all nuclear weapons, as well as to prohibit their development, production, acquisition, testing,

stockpiling, transfer, use or threat of use, and to provide for their destruction. In that context, we would like to recall the resolve of the world leaders at the Millennium Summit, as contained in the Millennium Declaration.

With regard to that Declaration, we would like to highlight the focus on the elimination of weapons of mass destruction, in particular nuclear weapons, and the intent to keep all options open for achieving this aim, including the possibility of convening an international conference to identify ways and means of eliminating nuclear dangers.

NAM also reiterates its longstanding principled position for the total ban of all nuclear testing and expresses its concern over the lack of progress by the nuclear-weapon States to eliminate their nuclear arsenals and the negative developments with respect to the ratification of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty.

NAM remains of the view that, in the efforts aimed at realizing nuclear disarmament, global and regional approaches and confidence-building measures complement each other. Wherever possible, these should be pursued simultaneously to promote regional and international peace and security.

NAM believes that the international community's efforts to achieve non-proliferation should be undertaken in conjunction with concrete efforts to achieve nuclear disarmament. It also believes that the most effective way of preventing terrorists from acquiring weapons of mass destruction is through the total elimination of such weapons.

We underline that the threat of terrorists acquiring weapons of mass destruction should be addressed within the framework of the United Nations and international cooperation, consistent with the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter and international law.

NAM calls upon all Member States to support international efforts for preventing terrorists from acquiring weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery. We urge all States to take — and strengthen — national measures, as appropriate, to prevent terrorists from acquiring weapons of mass destruction, their means of delivery and materials and technologies related to their manufacturing.

While noting the adoption of Security Council resolutions 1540 (2004) and 1673 (2006), NAM underlines the need to ensure that no action by the Security Council undermines the United Nations Charter, the existing multilateral treaties on weapons of mass destruction, the international agreed organizations established in this regard, or the all-encompassing role of the General Assembly.

NAM cautions against the continuing use by the Security Council of its authority to define the legislative requirements for Member States in implementing the Council's decisions. In this regard, NAM stresses that the issue of non-State actors acquiring weapons of mass destruction should be addressed in an inclusive manner by the General Assembly, taking into account the views of all Member States.

NAM reiterates that the total elimination of nuclear weapons is the only absolute guarantee against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons. We reaffirm our conviction that, pending the total elimination of nuclear weapons, efforts for the conclusion of a universal, unconditional and legally binding instrument on security assurances to non-nuclear-weapon States should be pursued as a priority.

The Group continues to consider the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones (NWFZ) under the Treaties of Tlatelolco, Rarotonga, Bangkok, Pelindaba and Semipalatinsk and Mongolia's nuclear-weapon-free status as positive steps towards attaining the objective of nuclear disarmament. NAM welcomes the efforts aimed at establishing new NWFZ in all regions of the world on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at among the States of the region concerned. We also call for cooperation and broad consultation for this goal.

NAM reaffirms its support for the establishment of a zone free from nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East, and to this end, it reaffirms the need for the speedy establishment of a NWFZ in the Middle East, in accordance with Security Council resolution 487 (1981), and the relevant General Assembly resolutions adopted by consensus.

NAM States parties to the NPT recall that the 2000 NPT Review Conference had reaffirmed the importance of Israel's accession to the NPT and the

placement of all its nuclear facilities under comprehensive International Atomic Energy Agency safeguards, for achieving the goal of universal adherence to the Treaty in the Middle East.

NAM States parties to the NPT remain fully convinced that the NPT is a key instrument in the efforts to halt vertical and horizontal proliferation of nuclear weapons. NPT is the essential foundation for nuclear disarmament, and the States parties to the NPT should work towards a fair balance between mutual obligations and responsibilities under the Treaty, with a view to achieving the total elimination of nuclear weapons.

NAM States parties to the NPT call for the full implementation of, and the firm commitment by all States parties to, the package agreed at the 1995 NPT Review and extension Conference, which comprises the decision on strengthening the review process for the Treaty, the decision on principles and objectives for nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament, the decision on extension of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, the resolution on the Middle East and the Final Document of the 2000 NPT Review Conference, in particular the 13 practical steps for systematic and progressive efforts to implement article VI of the Treaty.

Regarding agenda item 2, "Practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional arms", NAM supports confidence-building measures in the field of conventional arms as a way to strengthen international peace and security. Past and present times are unfortunately replete with sagas of devastation brought about by the indiscriminate use of conventional weapons. Innocent people continue to face destruction and misery because of these weapons. Hence, there is growing concern among the members of NAM about the situation with respect to conventional arms.

We believe that confidence-building measures are neither a substitute nor a pre-condition for disarmament measures. However, as has been demonstrated in various parts of the world, confidence-building measures have the potential to create an atmosphere conducive to arms control and disarmament. We further believe that an unbalanced and incomplete approach to confidence-building measures, especially in some regions of the world, has not attained and cannot attain the desired results.

NAM maintains that confidence-building measures, especially when applied in a comprehensive manner, can be conducive to achieving structures of security based on cooperation and openness and can thus contribute to the wider objective of the renunciation of the threat or use of force. Implementation of the guidelines for appropriate types of confidence-building measures is important and should take fully into account the specific political, military and other conditions prevailing in a region.

NAM expresses its firm support for the unilateral, bilateral, regional and multilateral measures adopted by some Governments aimed at reducing their military expenditures, thereby contributing to the strengthening of regional and international peace and security.

NAM notes that, while some progress has been achieved in the working group, there remains work to be done. NAM is ready to engage constructively in the deliberations in Working Group II, based on revision 5, and urges all States to focus on the remaining issues for their resolution.

In conclusion, NAM would like to once again express its readiness and support in working with you, the Bureau, and the Chairs of the Working Groups to make the 2008 session successful. We also look forward to working actively and constructively by engaging in a transparent and productive deliberation with all members of the Commission with a view to reaching consensus on substantive recommendations for the two agenda items before us.

Mr. Heller (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): Our delegation is honoured to speak in this general debate on behalf of the members of the Rio Group: Argentina, Belize, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and my own country, Mexico.

The Rio Group would like at the outset to congratulate you, Ambassador De Klerk, on your election to preside over the 2008 substantive session of the Disarmament Commission, with which we conclude a cycle that began three years ago. Likewise, we would like to thank the Chairmen of Working Groups I and II, Mr. Jean-Francis Zinsou of Benin, and Mr. Carlos Perez of Brazil, who is replacing Mr. Carlos Duarte. Our congratulations go also to the Vice-Chairmen of the Commission. We reiterate our

readiness to help them bring their difficult task to a successful conclusion.

The Group takes this opportunity to express its recognition to the team that, under the chairmanship of Ambassador Elbio Rosselli of Uruguay, guided the substantive session of 2007.

The Rio Group thanks Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for being with us today and for his statement, which demonstrates his commitment to the disarmament agenda with the sense of urgency that it requires. We also thank Ambassador Sergio Duarte, High Representative for Disarmament Affairs.

The Rio Group notes with concern the lack of substantive agreements in the area of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. The Rio Group members form part of the first inhabited nuclear-weapon-free zone in the planet, established more than 40 years ago. This signifies our region's commitment and sense of responsibility in matters of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. In this context, we call again on nuclear-weapon States to adopt concrete measures to move ahead in the reduction of their arsenals, stressing the responsibility that these States bear in the implementation of disarmament and non-proliferation measures.

The Rio Group reiterates its solidarity with the other nuclear-weapon-free zones and urges the establishment or expansion of such zones in other regions. We echo the call of the States parties to the Treaty of Tlatelolco for the nuclear-weapon States to withdraw the interpretative statements they made when acceding to the Protocols of the aforementioned hemispheric Treaty.

We take note of recent official announcements by some of the nuclear-weapon States that are intended to review their nuclear policies. We hope that this will be conducive to the attainment of the objective of nuclear disarmament.

The Rio Group reaffirms its commitment to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), which is the cornerstone of the disarmament and non-proliferation regime. It favours its universality and calls on States that have not yet done so to sign it as non-nuclear-weapon States.

We also reaffirm our commitment to the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice entitled "Legality of the Threat or Use of Nuclear Weapons". Likewise, we consider that States parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) should comply with the Treaty in its entirety, without interpreting or implementing it in a selective manner.

We reaffirm the need to respect the right of States to research, produce and use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes and to receive transfers of material, equipment, scientific information and technology for such purposes, in the context of international law and in conformity with the obligations undertaken with the International Atomic Energy Agency.

The Rio Group once again stresses the fulfilment of the 13 practical steps agreed upon at the 2000 NPT Review Conference, and the bolstering of security assurances against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons.

At the same time, we emphatically call for the conclusion, as a priority, of a universal and legally binding instrument on negative security assurances for non-nuclear-weapon States. Such an instrument, more than any other measure, would provide a legal certainty and would guarantee a freeze on horizontal proliferation, making it unjustifiable and illegitimate.

The Rio Group also favours the launching of negotiations, without preconditions, on a multilateral and non-discriminatory international treaty including an international verification regime on the prohibition of the production of fissile material for the production of nuclear weapons or other explosive devices. This would be the next logical step in the nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime. In particular, it would be a concrete action to renew the commitment of nuclear-weapon States parties to the NPT to fulfil their obligations under article VI.

In the same spirit, the Rio Group must express its concern regarding signs of an arms race in outer space. In that connection, we invite all States to conclude the international agreements necessary to prevent such an arms race.

The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) plays an important role in the nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime. The Rio Group supports its prompt entry into force, which would significantly contribute to a systematic and progressive reduction of nuclear weapons, as well as to preventing the development of new types of such weapons. The Rio Group welcomes the efforts

undertaken by the Provisional Technical Secretariat with the view to prompt ratification of the CTBT. In that connection, we acknowledge Barbados, Colombia and the Dominican Republic, States within our region, for having ratified this important instrument. We congratulate Malaysia on doing the same. Once again, we call upon all States that have not yet signed or ratified the Treaty to do so as soon as possible.

The Rio Group reaffirms that full respect of international law and the adoption of confidence-building measures contribute to the strengthening of international peace and security and to the promotion of understanding, transparency and cooperation among States. It is therefore necessary to strengthen, enhance and broaden confidence-building measures at all levels, in particular with respect to the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All its Aspects, the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms, and the United Nations System for the Standardized Reporting of Military Expenditures, which are examples of important United Nations initiatives. At the regional level, we highlight the Inter-American Convention on Transparency in Conventional Weapons Acquisitions.

The Rio Group attaches particular importance to the issue of ammunition. We believe it appropriate for the United Nations to focus specific attention on this issue, while acknowledging that the problem of small arms and light weapons is intrinsically linked to that of ammunition.

That is why the Rio Group considers it important to enhance the implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All its Aspects. We hope that the third Biennial Meeting of States, which will soon take place in New York, will give us the opportunity to generate concrete results that will improve the implementation of the Programme of Action.

The Rio Group expresses its concern over the lack of political commitment by some States to prevent the proliferation of conventional weapons, including those that have excessively cruel or indiscriminate effects. In that regard, we recognize the different processes being promoted by the international community to address the issue of cluster munitions, given their humanitarian impact.

With regard to the issue of common international criteria on the import, export and transfer of conventional weapons, the Rio Group expresses the hope that the work of the Group of Governmental Experts established to study the feasibility, scope and parameters of a draft legally binding instrument on the conventional arms trade, which is chaired by Argentina, can adequately reflect the diversity of opinion among Member States on this issue.

The Rio Group is fully prepared to cooperate with you, Mr. Chairman, in achieving concrete results during this session, especially given that this is the last year of the 2006-2008 cycle of the Commission's substantive sessions. It would be desirable to make progress in all the areas being considered. However, we should not allow progress in one area to be conditioned by equivalent advances in another. Taking into account the complexity of the issues, the insistence on the parallel unfolding of negotiations would in practice mean preventing the Commission from reaching at least partial results in its work. We call upon all delegations to show the political will and flexibility in their positions necessary to make a good outcome possible.

Mr. Tarragô (Brazil): It is a pleasure for my delegation to see you, Sir, as Chairman of the Disarmament Commission at its 2008 substantive session. Please accept our warm congratulations on your election, as well as the assurance of the full cooperation of my delegation in your endeavours.

The Brazilian delegation associates itself with the statement just delivered by the representative of Mexico on behalf of the Rio Group. We also welcome the speech made earlier today by the Secretary-General and hope that his remarks will inspire our deliberations.

We are at the end of a three-year cycle in the Disarmament Commission. The two Working Groups — entrusted, respectively, with the issue of ways and means to achieve nuclear disarmament and that of confidence-building measures in the field of conventional arms — held extensive deliberations and are working on documents that we consider to be a good basis for agreement. A meaningful and generally agreed outcome is possible and long overdue.

Achieving substantive results in the Disarmament Commission is even more important in view of the recent lack of progress in disarmament and

non-proliferation negotiations. Negative developments such as the deadlock in the review process of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), the paralysis at the Conference on Disarmament, the continued delay in the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and the lack of agreement regarding the Programme of Action on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms — disturbing as they may be — must not detract us from persevering in the pursuit of disarmament and non-proliferation within the United Nations framework. The Disarmament Commission is the agreed forum for that essential exercise and has, in our view, a key role to play.

Working Group I will once again carry on its deliberations in an international scenario in which nuclear disarmament is far from a reality. Over the past few years, we have noticed a worrisome development through which renewed emphasis has been placed on non-proliferation and less and less attention is being paid to nuclear disarmament. The modest achievements made in this field have only a very precarious basis, as they are not the result of multilaterally negotiated, irreversible and verifiable agreements and thus can easily be rolled back.

The growing emphasis on strengthening non-proliferation mechanisms must be accompanied by similar efforts in terms of disarmament and the enhancement of international cooperation for the development of nuclear technology for peaceful purposes. Instead, regretfully, we see that new rationales are sought to justify the maintenance of current stockpiles or the development of new and more sophisticated nuclear weapons. Furthermore, nuclear-weapon States leave little doubt as to their intention not only to keep their nuclear arsenals indefinitely but also to modernize and improve them, in direct conflict with their obligations under the NPT. So long as the States that possess nuclear weapons continue to believe that those weapons constitute a critical element of their security strategy, the goal of the complete elimination of nuclear weapons will remain elusive and distant. Reducing the role of these weapons in strategic and security doctrines and policies is therefore essential for realizing the goal of nuclear disarmament.

We expect those concerns to be duly reflected in the paper to be produced by Working Group I, so that recommendations on these issues, which are of great importance to the overwhelming majority of Member States, can be forwarded to the General Assembly.

Let me underline that Brazil deeply appreciates the confidence that you, Mr. Chairman, and the Commission expressed in endorsing a Brazilian official to continue to chair Working Group II. I wish to highlight that the work done in the Group over the past two years has produced a text that we believe can form the basis for an agreement.

Confidence-building measures aim to alter inaccurate perceptions and to avoid misunderstandings about military actions and policies that might otherwise provoke violent conflict. Over time, they can pave the way for more stable political and diplomatic relations, transform parties' ideas about their need for security and even encourage moves to identify shared security interests and highlight the importance of effective disarmament initiatives. Confidence-building measures, in particular in the field of conventional weapons, have become important steps in building the trust, stability and security needed to overcome conflict and enhance efforts at development.

A range of confidence-building measures are available and are being actively used to pave the way for disarmament, reduce tensions and avert possible military conflict. They have proven to be effective, and innovative ways to use them are being applied. Confidence-building measures have often also addressed the proliferation and misuse of small arms and light weapons — a problem that poses one of the greatest arms-related challenges to peace and security for many countries, especially in Africa.

The issues we address in the two Working Groups are distinct in nature and in scope. Advances in one cannot be made contingent upon progress in the other. Delegations should engage in deliberations in good faith and exercise sufficient flexibility, with a view to reaching our common objective.

The Disarmament Commission is a deliberative body with universal participation, dedicated to long-term discussion of disarmament issues, with a view to the submission of concrete recommendations to the General Assembly. It is not a forum that negotiates legally binding agreements. It therefore does not operate under the constraints that characterize such negotiations. In view of the need to achieve concrete results at the end of this cycle, it is especially important that delegations engage in the discussions in

a constructive spirit, as they seek to overcome the remaining differences.

The Disarmament Commission was created at the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament to serve as a forum for all United Nations Member States to deliberate on major disarmament issues. The Commission has since produced several useful recommendations that prepared the ground for multilateral disarmament negotiations.

The enormous challenges confronting the Disarmament Commission call for a deeper sense of responsibility and commitment to uphold the integrity of the international disarmament and non-proliferation regime. Brazil believes that the Commission remains relevant as a means to explore new avenues towards disarmament. It is up to us to take advantage of this opportunity to restore that sense of purpose to our deliberations.

Mr. Malmierca Díaz (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): Permit me, Sir, on behalf of my delegation, to congratulate you on your election to the chairmanship of the Disarmament Commission. Our congratulations go also to the other members of the Bureau and to the Chairmen of the two Working Groups. We wish also to express our appreciation to His Excellency Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his statement and to acknowledge the presence of Mr. Sergio de Queiroz Duarte, High Representative for Disarmament Affairs.

The Cuban delegation expresses its full support for the statement made by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM); it clearly reflected the Movement's principled positions and priorities in the disarmament sphere, as set out in documents adopted at NAM summits and ministerial meetings, including the fourteenth summit, held in Havana in September 2006.

Recent years have been marked by an impasse in the multilateral disarmament agenda, and this has not left the Disarmament Commission unaffected. It is worrying that no concrete results have been achieved since 2003. Unfortunately, despite the proclaimed end of the cold war several years ago, world military expenditure, far from being reduced, continues to increase at an alarming rate. This year alone, the world's main investor in weaponry, the United States, may alone be devoting more than $700 billion to such expenditures — 48 per cent of the world total.

In itself, increasing military spending arouses distrust and legitimate international concern. We cannot remain on the sidelines faced with this situation. It is counterproductive that world military expenditures continue to exceed by far the funds devoted to meeting the Millennium Development Goals. These facts must be addressed with urgent action. Cuba reiterates its proposal to create a fund, managed by the United Nations, to which at least half of current military spending would be allocated, in order to address the economic and social development of the countries in need. That initiative, besides its obvious benefits, could have the added value of being a confidence-building measure.

The Disarmament Commission is entering the third year of its cycle of deliberations on two highly relevant items. It is in our hands to take concrete steps towards general and complete disarmament. The work that the multilateral disarmament machinery will carry out in the near future will largely depend on the outcome of this session.

Nuclear weapons pose a serious threat to the entire human race. Thousands of them are ready for immediate use. Far from making progress on their destruction, the nuclear Powers persist in modernizing them. The very existence of nuclear weapons, along with doctrines prescribing their possession and use, constitutes a grave threat to international peace and security. Cuba reaffirms the historical position of the Non-Aligned Movement that nuclear disarmament is, and must continue to be, the highest priority in the sphere of disarmament.

Nuclear-weapon States have the legal obligation not only to pursue but also to bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to complete nuclear disarmament under strict and effective international control.

The relevance of nuclear disarmament cannot be ignored or downplayed. It is known that some have the intention of promoting an approach of selective non-proliferation; here, the problem lies not in the existence of nuclear weapons, but in the "good" or "bad" behaviour of those that have them.

Cuba categorically rejects selective implementation of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). The obligations undertaken on nuclear disarmament and the peaceful use of nuclear energy cannot continue to be pushed into the background within the framework of the

Treaty. We strongly support respect for the inalienable right of States to the peaceful use of nuclear energy, in strict compliance with the commitments undertaken under the NPT. Likewise, we endorse the conclusion, as a priority matter, of a universal, unconditional and legally binding instrument on security guarantees for non-nuclear-weapon States.

We appreciate the efforts carried out by Mr. Jean-Francis Régis Zinsou of Benin, Chairman of Working Group I, charged with consideration of the item entitled "Recommendations for achieving the objective of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation of nuclear weapons". We think his efforts to advance the group's work and to try to close the gap in the positions of member States in order to achieve the successful conclusion of the present cycle are particularly useful. The Cuban delegation is ready to continue to cooperate in this regard.

On the other hand, we are seriously concerned at the lack of political will of some delegations — fortunately in the minority — to achieve concrete progress in Working Group I. We hope that at the present session we will all show the seriousness-mindedness needed to advance towards the achievement of our goals, generating concrete recommendations to make progress towards nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. The Cuban delegation is ready to consider a variety of options for the Working Group I outcome document. We reaffirm that any outcome will have to be the subject of substantive negotiations and enjoy consensus among member States.

Regarding the item "Practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional weapons", we reiterate that Cuba support such measures as a way to strengthen international peace and security, as long as they fully respect the principles and purposes of the United Nations Charter. Because they are voluntary in nature, confidence-building measures must not be imposed. The success of this process will depend on the achievement of true consensus among States. There are no single recipes. In order for the confidence-building measures to be really effective, they must respond to situations specific to the country or region in question.

Although there is much to be done, considerable progress has been made in the work of Working Group II. We consider that the latest working document submitted by its Chairman constitutes an excellent basis for success in our deliberations on this issue. We wish much success to the fraternal delegation of Brazil — and in particular we wish every success to Mr. Carlos Luís Dantas Coutinho Perez in the performance of his task as Chairman of the Group.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, allow me to reiterate the Cuban delegation's full support to you in your work.

Mr. Hu Xiaodi (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): The Chinese delegation would like to congratulate you, Sir, on your election to the chairmanship of the Disarmament Commission at its present session. I am convinced that, with your vast experience and diplomatic skill, you will lead this session to success. My delegation assures you and other delegations of its full cooperation.

In recent years, the overall process of international arms control and disarmament has been at a low ebb. There is still a long way to go towards complete nuclear disarmament. The nuclear non-proliferation regime is facing severe challenges. Military and security factors are becoming more prominent in international relations. Against that backdrop, our deliberations on recommendations for achieving the objective of nuclear disarmament, non-proliferation and practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional weapons have genuine significance.

This is the last session of the current cycle of the Disarmament Commission's deliberations. Over the past two years, we have had in-depth exchanges of views on both agenda items. In spite of divergent views on some issues, our work has achieved certain progress. China appreciates the efforts of the Chairpersons of the two Working Groups in pursuit of consensus and is ready to further consider the relevant draft texts.

During the two most recent sessions of the Disarmament Commission, the Chinese delegation elaborated upon its positions, proposals and policies on nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. I would like to take this opportunity to emphasize the following points.

First, nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation are closely related to international security. A sound international security environment will give impetus to and guarantee the nuclear

disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation process. The nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation effort will, in turn, contribute to the establishment of a solid foundation for international security.

The international community should abide by the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter and other universally recognized norms of international law in promoting the building of a harmonious world of mutual trust, mutual benefit, equality and cooperation and in establishing an international environment of peace, stability and common security so as to eliminate the motivation for keeping or seeking nuclear weapons and create the necessary conditions for the realization of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation.

Secondly, nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation complement and reinforce each other. All States parties should fully implement the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) in an earnest way and strive to promote substantive progress in the current NPT review process. The relationship among nuclear disarmament, non-proliferation and the peaceful uses of nuclear energy should be appropriately addressed, and nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation should be advanced in a balanced way. The legitimate rights of all countries to the peaceful uses of nuclear energy should be fully guaranteed and respected while the goal of non-proliferation is realized.

Thirdly, the complete and thorough disarmament of nuclear weapons cannot be accomplished overnight. It should be achieved through systematic, gradual and specific measures on the basis of safeguarding the strategic balance and stability of the world. In that regard, the two States with the largest nuclear arsenals bear special and primary responsibilities for nuclear disarmament. They should continue to take the lead in reducing their nuclear arsenals significantly in a verifiable and irreversible manner. The nuclear-weapon States should renounce the doctrine of first use of nuclear weapons, unconditionally undertake not to use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear-weapon States or nuclear-weapon-free zones, and conclude relevant international legal instruments.

The Conference on Disarmament in Geneva should reach consensus on its programme of work as soon as possible so as to carry out substantive work on nuclear disarmament, security assurances for non-nuclear-weapon States, fissile material cut-off and the prevention of an arms race in outer space. The international community should continue promoting the early entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty.

Fourthly, the proliferation of nuclear weapons has complex causes. It is therefore necessary to address both the root causes and the symptoms in a comprehensive manner. We should advance nuclear non-proliferation under the guidance of multilateralism and ensure impartiality and non-discrimination. Embargoes and pressure can hardly offer a fundamental solution to proliferation concerns. The countries in question should commit themselves, on the basis of consultation on an equal footing and mutual respect, to enhancing dialogue, building confidence, normalizing their relations, and maintaining and promoting peace and stability so as to create the conditions necessary for the realization of nuclear non-proliferation.

As a nuclear-weapon State, China faithfully upholds its nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation responsibilities and obligations, as stipulated by the NPT. It has always exercised the utmost restraint on the scale and development of its nuclear weapons. China has not and will not take part in a nuclear arms race. It has consistently pursued a policy of unconditional no first use of nuclear weapons and no use or threat of use of nuclear weapons against non-nuclear weapon States or nuclear-weapon-free zones. China is strictly implementing its international nuclear non-proliferation obligations and is focusing greater attention on and actively participating in the relevant international efforts.

Working hard to promote the peaceful resolution of regional nuclear issues, we have always advocated the peaceful settlement of the Korean peninsula nuclear issue. As part of the joint efforts of the parties concerned, China has contributed to the convening of the six-party talks with a view to achieving the denuclearization of the peninsula. Pursuing our unremitting efforts to actively mediate among the parties, we will do our best to help overcome the current difficulties, maintain the momentum of the six-party talks and facilitate the denuclearization process so as to ensure the peace, security and stability of the Korean peninsula.

China has consistently striven for the peaceful resolution of the Iranian nuclear issue through diplomatic efforts and negotiations. It advocates the strict implementation of international non-proliferation obligations and respect for the legitimate rights of all countries to the peaceful use of nuclear energy. Diplomatic negotiation is the best way to solve the Iranian nuclear issue and serves the common interests of the international community. All parties should intensify diplomatic efforts to reach agreement on possible ways to resume negotiations at an early date with a view to seeking a long-term, comprehensive and appropriate solution to the Iranian nuclear issue.

China supports confidence-building measures in the field of conventional weapons. Deliberations on that agenda item in the Disarmament Commission in recent years reflect some common ground among the parties concerned, as well as the complexity and sensitivity of the issue.

The issue of conventional arms touches upon the major security concerns of various countries. Confidence-building measures, on a voluntary basis and in conformity with the security interests of the countries concerned, are truly conducive to building confidence among countries. In promoting confidence-building measures, we need to take into consideration the comfort level of the parties concerned and avoid elements that may give rise to serious divergence. We need to develop confidence-building measures in the light of the specific situation and moment in different regions, with an objective and pragmatic approach and in a step-by-step and incremental manner.

China has unswervingly followed the road of peaceful development and pursued a defensive national defence policy. In recent years, China has actively promoted and participated in regional disarmament and confidence-building measures. Within such frameworks as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations Regional Forum and the Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia, China has been working with relevant countries to vigorously explore and implement confidence-building measures aimed at enhancing mutual trust and promoting regional security. Last year, China began annual reporting of its military expenditures to the United Nations and resumed its participation in the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms. Those represent renewed efforts by China in confidence-building measures in the field of conventional weapons. Our policies and actions demonstrate that China is a strong force in safeguarding international and regional peace and stability. China's development will not constitute any threat to any other country.

On the basis of the aforementioned principles and positions, China is prepared to make concerted efforts with all other parties to promote progress on the two agenda items being considered by the Disarmament Commission at its present session.

Mr. Akram (Pakistan): First of all, I should like, on behalf of the Pakistan delegation, to felicitate you, Sir, on your election as Chairman of the Disarmament Commission. We believe that this session is an important one and could make an important contribution to the process of disarmament. We also would like to congratulate the Vice-Chairs, the Chairs of the Working Groups and the other members of the Bureau. We look forward to extending our full cooperation to you and the other office bearers of the Commission. It is particularly auspicious to see Sergio Duarte, who is leading the disarmament work of the United Nations with such dynamism, here with us this morning.

We align ourselves with the position of the Non-Aligned Movement as enunciated by the representative of Indonesia.

Every State has the right to security, as recognized under the United Nations Charter. The Final Document of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament (General Assembly resolution S-10/2) enshrined the principle of equal security for all States. That is a goal for which we should continue to strive in a world that is unequal politically, economically and, especially, militarily.

Pakistan is convinced that credible security can flow only from a cooperative approach and from the construction of collective security within a rule-based international order. It is therefore imperative that unilateralism or exclusive approaches yield to an agreed multilateral approach to disarmament.

Pakistan has pursued the goal of effective and cooperative security at the bilateral level, the regional level and the international level. Given the special circumstances in our region, Pakistan adheres to the policy of credible minimum deterrence as a means of promoting and preserving security in South Asia.

The global consensus on disarmament and non-proliferation has eroded over the past decade and a half, owing to several reasons, such as the unwillingness of certain Powers to give up their nuclear weapons; the vertical proliferation of nuclear weapons; a stillborn Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty; the ongoing nuclear development and deployment of nuclear weapons by certain States; the perceived threat of proliferation, even from within the parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT); the technological capability of several non-nuclear-weapon States to develop nuclear weapons at short notice; large stockpiles of fissile material; the addition of the threat from non-State actors to the equation; the discriminatory application of non-proliferation norms; the failure of collective means to counter proliferation; the exacerbation of asymmetries that have upset military balances in the regional and global contexts; and, last but not least, the progressive militarization of outer space, including through the development and deployment of anti-ballistic-missile (ABM) systems.

We must revive the consensus on disarmament and non-proliferation. Unless there is a broad agreement on the goals and parameters that need to be pursued, it will be difficult to achieve breakthroughs on specific and selective objectives in this context. Pakistan has proposed that a special conference be convened to develop a new consensus on disarmament and non-proliferation — a consensus that responds to the new realities and challenges. We believe that it should reflect the following broad elements.

First, we must revive the commitment by all States to the goal of complete nuclear disarmament. There can and should be no ambiguity regarding that objective. Second, it is important, in our view, to reduce and eventually eliminate the discrimination in the current non-proliferation regime and arrangements.

Third, it is important to seek ways and means to normalize the relationship of the three nuclear-weapon States that are outside the NPT with the non-proliferation regime. In that context, let me say that Pakistan supports negotiations on a fissile material treaty based on the Shannon mandate and the A-5 proposal for a universal, non-discriminatory and multilateral treaty that is internationally and effectively verifiable.

Fourth, we need to address new issues such as the danger of access to weapons of mass destruction by non-State actors. In that context, we consider the provisions of Security Council resolution 1540 (2004) as an important building block for international measures.

Fifth, we need to agree on universal and non-discriminatory rules that ensure the right of every State to the peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

Sixth, we must enshrine universal, non-discriminatory and legally binding negative security assurances for non-nuclear-weapon States until the goal of nuclear disarmament has been achieved. We also need to address the issue of missiles, but it should be addressed in its entirety, including the development and deployment of ABM systems.

Seventh, we need to strengthen existing international instruments to prevent the militarization of outer space, including the development of anti-satellite weapons. Eighth, we need to arrest the disturbing trend of escalation in the number and sophistication of conventional weapons, which has a causal relationship with the continuing reliance of some States on nuclear weapons. Ninth, we need to identify means of implementing the United Nations Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons.

And finally, we need to revitalize the United Nations disarmament machinery, especially the Conference on Disarmament and the Disarmament Commission, as well as the First Committee.

At the same time, it is important to develop regional and international approaches to promote conventional disarmament and the reduction of military expenditures. Weapon possession should flow from the legitimate security needs of States, not from the desire to dominate other States Members of the United Nations or to impose one's will or worldview on others. Pakistan is strongly opposed to any arms race at the regional or the global level.

The obstacles to reviving the disarmament process are many and seemingly insuperable. But the stakes are too high for the international community to resign itself to a perpetual deadlock. Political will and a genuine empathy for the security concerns of other States, especially the smaller States, can lead in the

direction of a genuine and agreed multilateral process of disarmament and non-proliferation.

To find a meaningful solution, we need a comprehensive approach that addresses the different facets of the issue with equality and commitment. The Disarmament Commission can play a very important role, the role that was envisaged for it in the Final Document of the First Special Session on Disarmament, that is, to clarify the issues, to identify the possible areas for negotiation and to help in reviving a genuine consensus on nuclear and conventional disarmament and non-proliferation. That consensus, evolved in this Commission, could then be adopted and sanctified in a special conference held under the auspices of the United Nations.

Mrs. Aitimova (Kazakhstan): At the outset, please allow me to extend my congratulations to you, Sir, on your election as Chairman of the Disarmament Commission at its 2008 session, as well as to all the members of the Bureau. I would also like to express our gratitude to the Chairmen of the two Working Groups for the revised informal papers that they have submitted, which will serve as a basis for our discussions.

Kazakhstan looks forward to working closely with fellow delegates to achieve, under the Chairman's able guidance, substantive progress in addressing the important issues under the Commission's two agenda items.

The history of independent Kazakhstan is inextricably linked with disarmament. When it closed a nuclear test site and denounced its nuclear arsenal in the early stages following its independence, Kazakhstan set a highly responsible example for current and future generations by convincingly demonstrating that it is not nuclear arsenals, but a peaceful foreign policy, internal stability and sustainable economic and political development that in fact provide real security.

In September 2006, Kazakhstan, along with other Central Asian States, signed the Treaty on a Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone in Central Asia, the creation of which was a significant contribution to stability and security in Asia. This successful regional initiative also concerns the potential strength of the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).

It is widely recognized that there has been a lack of real progress and that the international community has failed to effectively resolve the issues of disarmament and non-proliferation, due mostly to the absence of consensus and political will. First of all, the NPT, the main instrument of the nuclear non-proliferation, has failed to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons and the appearance of new de facto nuclear countries. Furthermore, the threat of nuclear weapons falling into the hands of terrorists has significantly increased. In addition, we have seen no evidence of nuclear Powers meeting their commitments on the reduction of their arsenals.

In this regard, at the sixty-second session of the General Assembly of the United Nations, the President of Kazakhstan, Mr. Nursultan Nazarbayev, called upon the nuclear States to move towards a world free of nuclear weapons, thus creating an example for others to follow, and to undertake measures to maintain the efficiency of the NPT and to strengthen the nuclear weapons non-proliferation regime.

We are convinced that it is necessary to develop mechanisms for applying effective leverage on the States that possess nuclear weapons that act outside of the NPT legal framework and to provide instruments for putting pressure on those States that would attempt to leave the Treaty in the future.

Kazakhstan has repeatedly proposed drafting an internationally binding document against the use or threat of use of the nuclear weapons against non-nuclear countries. We are also interested in pursuing discussions on negative security assurances, as this matter is closely related to the nuclear disarmament process.

The destabilizing effect of the accumulation and/or proliferation of conventional weapons continues to be a key factor in security and stability in the world. Criminal and terrorist groups as well as radical religious movements are actively engaged in illicit arms trafficking.

The Commission's agenda item entitled "Practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional weapons" therefore presents a very important and effective element in strengthening regional and global security. To that end, we should elaborate a broad spectrum of practical components, including, inter alia, establishing direct and open communications, arms control, verification, and

monitoring programmes. We hope our deliberations on that agenda item will significantly contribute to productive work in the upcoming Third Biennial Meeting of States to Consider the Implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects.

It is important to keep moving towards our common goals, as even small steps in the right direction can lead to great achievements. As the mandate of the Commission is of a deliberative character, I believe that we have enough political will and readiness to formulate meaningful recommendations on the issues of this three-year cycle that will contribute to the multilateral machinery of disarmament and non-proliferation.

Mr. Al Bayati (Iraq): At the outset, Sir, allow me to congratulate you on your unanimous election to preside over the Disarmament Commission at this year's session. I am confident that, under your able guidance and leadership, the 2008 session will succeed in fulfilling the mandate entrusted to the Commission by the General Assembly. I should also like to extend my felicitations to the other members of the Bureau on their election. In addition, I wish the Chairs of the two Working Groups every success in guiding their deliberations and call upon United Nations Member States to display the political will and flexibility necessary to reach agreement on recommendations based on the two substantive agenda items being considered at the current session.

I associate myself with the statement delivered by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

Iraq reaffirms the importance of the Disarmament Commission as the specialized and deliberative body within the United Nations multilateral disarmament machinery promoting the submission of concrete recommendations to the General Assembly. We reaffirm that attaining the objective of nuclear disarmament continues to be our highest priority. We remain alarmed at the threat to humanity posed by the continued existence of nuclear weapons and their possible use or threat of use, and we remain deeply concerned over the slow pace of progress towards nuclear disarmament.

Security Council resolution 1762 (2007) of 29 June 2007 — in which the Council decided to terminate immediately the mandates of the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC) and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) under the relevant resolutions and stated that the continued operations of UNMOVIC and of the IAEA's Iraq Nuclear Verification Office were no longer necessary to verify Iraq's compliance with its obligations under the relevant resolutions — reaffirmed Iraq's disarmament obligations under the relevant resolutions; acknowledged Iraq's constitutional commitment to the non-proliferation, non-development, non-production and non-use of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons and of associated equipment, material and technologies for use in the development, manufacture, production and use of such weapons, as well as of delivery systems; and urged Iraq to continue to implement that commitment and to adhere to all applicable disarmament and non-proliferation treaties and related international agreements. Moreover, according to depositary notification C.N.819.2007. TREATIES-3 of 16 August 2007, Iraq acceded to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction on 15 August 2007. The Convention entered into force for Iraq on 1 February 2008.

We underline the need for members of the Commission to fulfil their obligations related to nuclear disarmament and arms control and to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons in all its aspects. We call upon all members to renew and fulfil their individual and collective commitments to multilateral cooperation as an important means of pursuing and attaining their common objectives in the area of disarmament and non-proliferation.

Iraq calls upon the nuclear-weapon States to refrain from nuclear sharing for military purposes under any kind of security arrangement, in conformity with their obligations, and to consider fully implementing their unequivocal commitments to totally eliminate their nuclear arsenals, through an accelerated process of negotiations and through full implementation of the 13 practical steps aimed at advancing systematically and progressively towards a nuclear-weapon-free world, to which they agreed in 2000.

Iraq is fully convinced that the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) is a key

instrument in the efforts to halt the vertical and horizontal proliferation of nuclear weapons and that it is the essential foundation for nuclear disarmament. Iraq reaffirms its commitment not to transfer to any recipient whatsoever nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices or control over such weapons or explosive devices, either directly or indirectly, and not in any way to assist, encourage or induce any non-nuclear-weapon State to manufacture or otherwise acquire nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices or control over such weapons or explosive devices.

Iraq supports the call for the establishment in the Middle East of a zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction. We reaffirm the need for the speedy establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East in accordance with Security Council resolution 487 (1981) and the relevant General Assembly resolutions adopted by consensus. We recall that the 2000 Review Conference of the Parties to the NPT reaffirmed the importance of Israel acceding to the NPT and subjecting all its nuclear facilities to comprehensive IAEA safeguards, and of attaining the goal of universal adherence to the Treaty in the Middle East. Furthermore, we call for a total and complete prohibition on the transfer of any nuclear-related equipment, information, material, facilities, resources or devices and on the extension of assistance in nuclear-related scientific or technological fields to Israel. At the same time, Iraq reaffirms the basic and inalienable right of all States to the development, research, production and use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes, without discrimination.

Iraq reaffirms that the IAEA is the competent authority responsible for verifying and assuring, in accordance with its Statute and its safeguards system, compliance with its safeguards agreements with States parties, undertaken in fulfilment of their obligations under article III, paragraph 1, of the NPT, with a view to preventing the diversion of nuclear energy from peaceful uses to nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices.

Iraq also supports the objectives of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). The Treaty, which is currently being considered for ratification by the Iraqi parliament, is aimed at enforcing a comprehensive ban on all nuclear-test explosions and halting the qualitative development of nuclear weapons, which could pave the way for the total elimination of such weapons. We reaffirm that the total elimination of nuclear weapons is the only absolute guarantee against their use or threat of use and that it is the most effective way to prevent terrorists from acquiring weapons of mass destruction, in accordance with the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter and international law and in conformity with Security Council resolution 1540 (2004).

Iraq believes that it is essential that the guidelines for appropriate types of confidence-building measures be implemented by all States, taking fully into account the specific political, military and other conditions prevailing in a given region.

Iraq expresses its firm support for the unilateral, bilateral, regional and multilateral measures that a number of Governments have adopted to reduce their military expenditures, thereby contributing to the strengthening of regional and international peace and stability.

Mr. Kim Hyun Chong (Republic of Korea): At the outset, allow me to congratulate you, Sir, on your election to the chairmanship of the Disarmament Commission, as well as all other Bureau members and the Chairs of the Working Groups on their election. As a country that had the honour of chairing the Commission during the first year of the three-year cycle, I assure you of my delegation's full support for and cooperation with your work.

We are now in the final year of the three-year cycle and have the task of arriving at a consensus on concrete recommendations for the General Assembly on two important issues, namely, attaining the objectives of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, and practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional arms.

For the first time since 2003, we in the Commission have an opportunity to agree on recommendations for the General Assembly. I believe that now is the time for us to truly engage in a creative exchange of ideas, so that this forum can make its unique contributions in the field of disarmament. I sincerely hope that the result will be a building block, not a stumbling block, for the upcoming 2008 session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2010 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT).

Despite all the setbacks and challenges, the central role of the NPT as the normative foundation for nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation remains unchanged. We must enhance the integrity of and confidence in the Treaty, while striking a balance between nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. That can be achieved only if each State carries out its own duties, without making them conditional on implementation by others.

The Republic of Korea firmly believes that the global regime for nuclear non-proliferation should be further reinforced. In order to increase global confidence in the NPT regime, the monitoring and verification mechanism of the Treaty needs to be strengthened. In that regard, we support universalization of the Additional Protocol of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). We also look forward to an additional extension of the mandate set out in Security Council resolution 1540 (2004).

Nuclear disarmament must go hand in hand with efforts for nuclear non-proliferation. We urge nuclear-weapon States parties to the NPT to continuously implement their obligations under article VI of the Treaty. Noting initiatives taken or planned by nuclear-weapon States, we believe that there is still more progress to be anticipated.

If the dual task of nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation is to be accomplished more effectively, the first set of goals that the international community should work to achieve is early entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) and the launching of negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty. We encourage all signatories to the CTBT that have not ratified the Treaty to do so at an early date, and we support the efforts being made in the Conference on Disarmament to reach consensus on the programme of work.

Conventional weapons do as much damage to humanity as nuclear weapons. Recognizing and fully utilizing the existing confidence-building measures and promoting the role of the United Nations in this area are important in achieving the common, cooperative security of all Members.

In particular, the illicit trafficking of small arms and light weapons not only fuels conflicts but also hinders development. International efforts to curb the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, including the United Nations Programme of Action, should be implemented and strengthened. To that end, the Republic of Korea will be hosting, together with Norway and the European Union, a United Nations workshop on the implementation of the International Tracing Instrument in Seoul on 27 and 28 May.

We note that the General Assembly, at its sixty-second session, welcomed the report by the Group of Governmental Experts to consider further steps to enhance international cooperation in preventing, combating and eradicating the illicit brokering in small arms and light weapons. We would like to call on all Member States to implement the recommendations made by the Group, in order to address more effectively the problems caused by illicit brokering.

The United Nations Register of Conventional Arms has been successful in enhancing the level of transparency in military affairs, with an increasing number of Member States participating each year. Sharing objective information on military expenditures will greatly contribute to the sense of security of all Member States.

On the Korean Peninsula, we believe that putting reliable confidence-building measures in place between the two Koreas is essential for the promotion of inter-Korean reconciliation and cooperation. Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula is the key to security on the Peninsula. That in turn would provide the basis for other cooperative projects between the two Koreas, which would also contribute to confidence-building.

Before closing, I would like to share a belief of mine with all representatives present here today, who are working towards the same goal of achieving peace and security through disarmament. For the past decade, we have been talking ad nauseam about the disheartening trend in the field of disarmament. The United Nations disarmament machinery has been criticized by many as being mired in arguments and lost in translation. In short, the Disarmament Commission has been a dependent variable in the field of disarmament for too long. I firmly believe that we have reached the point where we can reverse that trend and break the stalemate. All of the representatives here today already have the vision, the knowledge and the willingness to make the change. What we need to do now is to focus our capabilities on achieving a goal within our reach. Whether we become part of the problem or part of the solution, the choice is ours.

Mr. Ben-Shaban (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) (*spoke in Arabic*): I should like at the outset to congratulate you, Sir, on your election as Chairman of the Disarmament Commission at its 2008 session. We have confidence in your ability to lead our work to the success that we seek. Through you, I should also like to congratulate the other members of the Bureau, as well as the Chairmen of the two Working Groups.

My delegation associates itself with the statement made by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the States members of the Non-Aligned Movement. We wish to make a few additional comments regarding the two items on our agenda at this session.

My delegation believes that we must ensure balance and non-selectivity in the implementation of the provisions of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), in order to break the current impasse in positions in the area of disarmament and non-proliferation. The cause of that impasse is found not in ineffectiveness on the part of the disarmament machinery, but in the lack of political will to pursue nuclear disarmament and to halt the horizontal and vertical proliferation of nuclear weapons.

In that connection, Libya once again reaffirms its commitment to full implementation of the NPT. We demonstrated that commitment in practice when we eliminated, of our own free will, all our equipment and programmes that could have led to the production of internationally prohibited weapons. Libya believes that, ultimately, the only way to dispel the current fears over the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons is to ensure the complete elimination of such weapons by establishing nuclear-weapon-free zones as swiftly as possible, including in the Middle East, in accordance with the decisions on the Middle East taken by the 1995 Review Conference of the Parties to the NPT and by the General Assembly, including, most recently, its resolution 62/18.

Unfortunately, the goal of eliminating nuclear weapons has not yet been reached. Moreover, the goal of establishing a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East has not been reached, owing to Israel's refusal to accede to the NPT without reservations, to eliminate its nuclear weapons and to place all of its nuclear facilities under the safeguards system of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

The provisions of the NPT must be applied in a complete and non-selective manner. I refer in particular to article VI, relating to negotiations on nuclear disarmament, and article IV, on facilitating — not limiting — the peaceful use and pursuit of nuclear technology. We reaffirm the importance of respecting the principles of the Final Document of the tenth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, the outcome of the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conferences and the outcome of the 2000 Review Conference — in particular the 13 practical steps as they relate to the implementation of article VI, specifically through a definitive commitment by the nuclear-weapon States to completely eliminate their nuclear arsenals, leading to the complete elimination of nuclear weapons.

Libya is convinced that progress on nuclear disarmament can help improve international security and contribute to non-proliferation. Libya calls for the conclusion of a legally binding, unconditional international instrument on security assurances for non-nuclear States, with a view to dispelling concerns about nuclear-weapon States meeting their commitment to completely eliminate their nuclear arsenals.

We also appeal for speedy implementation of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), through the signature and ratification of the Treaty by annex-2 States as soon as possible. If made operational, the CTBT would be an important element of non-proliferation.

Turning now to the agenda item entitled "Practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional weapons", Libya believes that the adoption of effective confidence-building measures is essential to ensure international peace and security, on the basis of the principle that States have the right to self-defence, sovereignty and non-interference in their internal affairs, while taking into consideration each region's specific characteristics and security and defence situation. In our view, confidence-building measures cannot replace disarmament or be a precondition for it. They are, however, important for the creation of a climate conducive to arms control and disarmament, and that will be the case only if they are applied in all regions in a comprehensive balanced manner.

We totally support unilateral, bilateral, regional and multilateral initiatives to reduce military spending, because they help strengthen international and regional peace and security. On the goal of transparency and the

United Nations Register of Conventional Arms, my delegation believes that these are selective and unbalanced because they are not applied to weapons of all kinds, including weapons of mass destruction, or to all aspects of the production, acquisition and stockpiling of weapons by States.

In conclusion, we reaffirm our ongoing commitment to the objectives of the Disarmament Commission. It is our hope that the Commission's work at the present session will result in consensus on serious, concrete recommendations on the two substantive items on our agenda. We are ready to provide complete cooperation in pursuit of that goal.

Organization of work

The Chairman: I wish to remind members that the list of speakers will close at 6 p.m. today.

The meeting rose at 12.15 p.m.